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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines the best practices in elementary social studies teaching. The paper enumerates five elements that make for powerful social studies teaching and learning. It focuses on how social studies elementary teaching should be implemented in the classroom, identifying 17 best practices. (BT)

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Best Practices in Elementary Social Studies

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Best Practices In Elementary Social Studies

- Social studies teaching and learning are powerful when they are meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging, and active (NCSS Position Statement, 1993; Expectations of Excellence, 1994).

- Social studies teaching and learning are powerful when they clearly address one or more of the ten NCSS themes (Expectations of Excellence, 1994).

- Social studies programs are powerful when they promote the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and a predisposition to civic action that helps extend the blessings of liberty to all citizens.

- Social studies programs are powerful when they help students use the frameworks of the social sciences and humanities as lenses for understanding and acting on experienced reality.

- Social studies programs are powerful then they help all students perceive themselves as intelligent and caring humans--young people who, based on their own deliberation and inquiry, are capable of generating new insights into the nature of social reality and also capable of making ethical decisions regarding future courses of action.

Best Practices In Elementary Social Studies

- A unit approach to instruction is employed.
- Technology resources are used to expand students' vistas of the world and support their quest for knowledge.
- Multiple assessment; clearly linked to instruction; including students themselves.
- Art, music, literature, and theater are used as tools to enrich and evidence students' learning.
- Teachers are freed to engage students in spontaneous learning events.
- Parent and community involvement.
- Wishes of the students themselves are honored.
- Teachers define and negotiate a defensible scope and sequence for the curriculum.
- Each year/semester/term contains at least one highly memorable experience.
- Attention consciously directed to the natural, hidden, and formal curriculum.
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Best Practices In Elementary Social Studies

- Attention given to both process and content learnings.
- A variety of instructional resources and strategies are regularly used.
- Blends inquiry experiences and direct instruction.
- Uses coherent, developmentally appropriate themes to integrate content from the social sciences and the humanities.
- Makes frequent use of maps and globes as a means of developing children's understanding of their world.
- Includes current events as a regular part of the ongoing social studies program.
- Honors the multiple perspectives of different socio-economic, ethnic, religious, and other groups important dimensions to authentic learning.

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